



**A Guide to
Talking to Your
Legislators**



Comprehensive Legislator Engagement Strategy for Post-Acute Health Services

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Activities to Engage In

- Host a tour.**
Invite members of Congress to tour your location and discuss key legislative issues that impact your health care business.
- Inform your employees.**
Ask your employees, family members, neighbors, and others to write their Congressman and register to vote. Inform them on the issues, ask them to participate in your grassroots efforts, and encourage them to vote.
- Share the faces of homecare.**
Show your members of Congress the faces of homecare – your patients and their constituents – through videos, photographs, and testimonials about what post-acute health care business means to them.
- Be a resource.**
Be a knowledgeable resource to your members of Congress on health care policy.
- Get your message out to the newspapers.**
Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about the role of the post-acute health care business in taking care of patients.
- Attend fund-raisers for candidates or host a fund-raiser yourself.**
This might include a group of consumers, caregivers, and employees who can talk about the type of care provided by post-acute health care businesses. Invite your competition to participate- legislative affairs are about the health of the industry and all health care businesses need to work together.
- Volunteer your time.**
Volunteer to work for Congressional campaigns including activities such as manning phone banks, transporting voters to the polls, and distributing campaign literature.
- Raise your issues publicly.**
Attend your U.S. Senate and House Members' town hall meetings in the district. Raise your issues publicly during or after the meeting. Introduce yourself, and thank them for their support of post-acute health care business.
- Have a meeting or open house at your facility.**
This might include a group of consumers, caregivers, and employees who can talk about the type of care provided. Ask your member of Congress to speak to the group. If the staff for the member of Congress agrees, invite the media to attend and take photos.
- Organize a forum or join a community group.**
Before the next election, organize a candidates' forum focused on health care, or participate with other groups in your community in sponsoring a survey of the candidates on their positions on your key issues. Publicize the results.

Meetings with Your Members of Congress

1. Request a personal meeting with your Member of Congress or U.S. Senator.

Call the scheduler or chief of staff in the Congressional office to arrange the meeting. When Congress is not in session during months like August, try to schedule a meeting when the member is back in the home district. A meeting with a Congressional staffer from the Members' office who handles healthcare issues can be very productive if the member is not available for the meeting.

2. At your meeting, briefly and succinctly describe the key issue.

Focus on only one or two key issues. Your time may be limited to 10 or 15 minutes. Include points about how the issue affects the Member's constituents, including your patients and employees. Always prepare a solution for every problem you present. It is also important to listen to your legislator's views. Each encounter should be an exchange of views, rather than a lecture from you. Understanding the basis of your legislator's views can give you valuable insight into how you might support or change those views.

3. Follow-up.

When the meeting is over, leave your legislator a one-page summary of your points. For your own use, develop talking points and stick with your message.

4. Tell your Member of Congress how important your organization is.

Describe the population you serve, the types of services you provide, number of patients and employees served, areas you provide services in, the cost-effectiveness of long term care pharmacy, and the difference that your services make in your patients' lives.

5. Put a face on homecare consumers.

Include patients or their family members in your meeting, if possible. Provide testimonials. Mention patients' situations and how your services affect their lives.

6. Stick to the facts.

Tell a compelling story and provide good information. But do not exaggerate.

7. Be diplomatic.

Do not disparage your competitors, other modalities of care, or CMS.

8. Ask for a commitment regarding how your Member of Congress will help.

For example, depending on what the issue is and how it can be resolved, you might want to ask him or her to co-sponsor a specific bill, write about your concerns to the CMS Administrator, talk to the Chair of a committee that handles the issue, or go on a site tour or home visit with you.

9. Ask what you can do to help your Member of Congress.

10. Follow up, and follow up again.

Within a few days of your visit, send an email thanking the Member of Congress for his or her time and briefly restate your issue and request. Follow up a week later with a phone call to see if you can provide any additional information.

Company Tours

A tour of your business is one important way to put a face on homecare issues. A tour can highlight the importance of post-acute care. Here are a few guidelines to consider when arranging a tour for your U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, or state and local officials.

A company tour will help you establish a favorable relationship with legislators. It presents an excellent opportunity to get to know your legislators and to familiarize them with problems and issues that affect your business.

Certain times of the year can be busy for a legislator. However, legislators look forward to learning more about the constituents, and will make time for a visit.

Suggestions for planning a successful tour include:

- **Write; don't telephone your invitation.**
Schedule your tour well in advance, and provide alternative dates. Follow up your email with a phone call; then confirm the arrangements in writing.
- **Be flexible about the time, but have a definite tour schedule.**
Leave enough time to adequately tour the business and to enjoy informal discussion. Don't rush the tour.
- **Notify your employees.**
Tell them the time and date of the tour, as well as highlights of the legislator's background.
- **Make sure your operations are in full motion.**
Action is essential to a successful and interesting tour.
- **Carefully map out the tour.**
Walk through the process of providing a post-acute service. From order intake through billing and collections. Point out the complexity and costs associated with each key step in the process.
- **Have key personnel on hand.**
Make certain that key management staff and employees are available during the tour. For example, department heads should be available to explain their operations.
- **Connect the dots.**
Make a connection between your organization's work and the critical post-acute care issues before Congress. Connect the dots for the Member of Congress and staff.

Here are some pointers that will make the tour move smoothly:

- **Know what messages you want to convey.**
Before the tour, decide what key points you want to get across to the legislator- stick to two issues.
- **Set the stage.**
Introduce the legislator to company officers and management personnel over coffee or breakfast, if time permits. This is a good time to give the legislator a brief history of the company. Present the legislator with written information — for example, an annual report and brochures about the company and its products. You may also provide a product sample, if appropriate.
- **Appoint a leader.**
The chief executive officer, or a senior manager, should greet the legislator and lead the tour.
- **Stick to the schedule.**
Keep track of the time, and keep the tour moving without hurrying.

- **Involve employees.**
Introduce your guest, by name, to the employees. Remember that many of them are also constituents of the legislator. If possible, leave some time during the tour for your employees to meet with the legislator.
- **Share key facts.**
Such as what types of patients your organization serves, what types of services are provided, how many employees work at the business, the economic impact of business in the region, and other information about the role that your organization plays in the community and in the individual lives of patients and their families.
- **Discuss important issues.**
Follow the tour with a short, private discussion, focusing on issues of greatest importance to your company.
- **In the tour, show all the components that go into providing prescriptions.**
Present a client or a case study for a client you have serviced and describe the impact your services have had on the client's condition.
- **Ask and offer help.**
Ask for the Member's help with specific legislative or regulatory issues affecting long term care pharmacy. Also offer to help the Member of Congress in whatever way you can.

After the tour, you should continue to develop a relationship with the legislator. Several ways to build a mutual understanding include:

- **Sending a letter of thanks.**
Always show your appreciation in writing, and don't forget to reiterate the key points made during the visit. Provide information requested by the legislator.
- **Showing interest.**
Express an interest in the legislator's political and legislative activities. Offer to help the legislator in proposed legislation of particular concern to him or her. Ask to receive the legislator's constituent newsletter.
- **Sharing information.**
Send the legislator copies of any photos taken during the tour, and provide copies of company newspaper articles detailing the visit. Put the legislator on the mailing list for external company literature.
- **Reinforce your views.**
Consider sending a brief description of your meeting to your trade organization highlighting the issues discussed and comments made by your legislator. Armed with that information, your trade organization can reinforce your views when meeting with other legislators and share your experience with other members.

Presentation Reminders

- Don't use the tour as an occasion to overload the legislator with an enormous amount of facts and figures. Only highlight the points that are imperative.
- Elected officials are more concerned about jobs and their constituents rather than profits. But your tour provides them with a means of learning about their constituents — the people they depend on for their position.
- External news-media coverage should be discouraged. The tour is not a media event, but an opportunity for you and your employees to speak frankly with legislators.
- Post-tour coverage in company newspapers or other company media should not convey the impression of favoritism.

Legislators Respond Best to the People!

Establishing and maintaining a relationship with your legislator will provide distinct opportunities for your present and future needs. Open communication channels will provide windows of opportunity to be heard and get your desired comments known to the ones who are responsible for legislation.

You should make every effort to establish a genuine, personal rapport with legislators and their staffs. A relationship based on trust and a common understanding that you and your business are building a stronger economy for our families, our communities and our future.

Legislators depend on long-term care pharmacies, like you, to tell them what's important to your business, and how proposed legislation or regulation will affect your company and employees.

It's not important that you be a member of the same political party, or that you agree on every issue. If a legislator learns to trust and respect your views, you will become a valuable resource to him or her on business issues.

Seize the Moment!

If you run into your legislator prior to setting up a formal meeting, take advantage of the opportunity. For example, if the legislator holds a public meeting or forum in your district, introduce yourself. Let him or her know you are a local business person who would like to stay in touch about the issues that affect you and your fellow post-acute health care businesses in the district.

Do Your Homework

To be effective, learn as much as you can about your legislators, including where they stand on the issues. It's also helpful to become familiar with your legislators' personal background, because you may find many common interests such as children, hobbies, sports or charitable causes. These common interests can help you build a relationship with your legislators.

Stay Informed

Once you have met with your legislators, stay informed of their activities and positions on the issues. You can do this in a variety of ways:

- During the legislative session, keep track of how your legislators vote on issues.
- Get your name on your legislators' mailing lists to receive their newsletters and position papers.
- Become active on your local Chamber of Commerce legislative committee.
- Attend a Regional MHA Membership Meeting in your area.

Stay In Touch

Once you've gotten to know your legislators, stay in touch by email and in person.

- Occasionally write to let them know how you feel about a recent vote or a position they've taken on an issue. Remember to say thanks when your legislator does something great. Positive comments are noticed and appreciated, and reinforce your credibility as a balanced representative of the business community.
- Take every opportunity at town meetings, debates, or other public functions to personally "touch base" with your legislators. Introduce yourself again and remember to identify yourself as a businessperson.
- Strike up a brief, informal conversation, asking about their family and taking the opportunity to do a bit of mini-lobbying, if appropriate.
- Put legislators on your mailing list for company newsletters or other company information.
- Drop in for a few minutes at your legislator's office. Reintroduce yourself to the secretary and staff, and remind them that you'd like to receive the legislator's news releases and position papers.

Remember the Staff

While it is important to work directly with your legislator, it's also a good idea to develop a good relationship with the legislator's staff. Legislative aides are often heavily involved in assembling background material and developing position papers for use by the legislator.



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